

New Military Deputy LTG Joseph L. Yakovac Jr. Plans to Put People First

Meg Williams

The Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (AL&T) Workforce welcomes new Military Deputy (MILDEP) to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ASAALT) LTG Joseph L. Yakovac Jr., who assumed duties Nov. 18, 2003.

LTG Yakovac brings extensive program and leadership experience to his new assignment. He has held every traditional developmental position from platoon leader through battalion commander as well as critical acquisition positions thereafter. His extensive mechanized infantry troop experience provides a depth of knowledge that few Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) officers have, which will undoubtedly benefit the AL&T Workforce and the Army as it continues to transform.

Yakovac's most recent assignments previous to his posting as the Program Executive Officer (PEO) for Ground Combat Systems in 2000 were as Deputy for Systems Acquisition, U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) and as Assistant Deputy for Systems Management and Horizontal Technology Integration, Office of the ASAALT. As a colonel, he fulfilled critical duties as the Project Manager (PM) for the Bradley Fighting Vehicle System and Deputy Commander for Acquisition, both at TACOM.

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He holds a B.S. degree from the U.S. Military Academy and an M.S. degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Colorado. Additionally, Yakovac is a graduate of the Army

Command and General Staff College, the Defense Systems Management College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. He earned the Expert Infantry Badge, Ranger Tab, Parachutist Badge, the Legion of Merit and seven awards of the Army Meritorious Service Medal.

The following interview, conducted Dec. 22, 2003, touches on Yakovac's (Y3's) personal leadership philosophy and his strategic direction for the im-

mediate future. Key excerpts of that interview are below. This interview is the first in a series of planned MILDEP articles and updates.

AL&T: We heard your motto is people, programs and processes. With the Army at war you will most likely emphasize Soldiers and the people who support them. How can the Army Acquisition Corps and more specifically, the Acquisition Support Center, best support the Army's ongoing war effort?



Y3: What I really want to look at in my first year — if I emphasize nothing else in terms of priorities — is the “people” aspect of acquisition. I have been frustrated in the last 5 or 6 years that we let the personnel management system manage our people. I want to get “people” back in “personnel management.” We should encourage officers to become their own career managers. I think they’ll provide a clear voice to our younger civilians. That being said, I know there are a lot of rules and regulations and I think within the confines of these regulations there is also room to maneuver.

AL&T: How can the Acquisition Support Center help you?

Y3: The Acquisition Support Center (ASC) is already helping me. For me to execute my priorities, I have to ask the ASC staff — if I have a short timeline, which one of these priorities is possible to

tackle? Some of my priorities may not be doable, but I can put things in place that over time could become reality.

Like anything else, you have to have some actionable short-term goals that you can meet to show people that, in fact, you're serious about it. So in the short term, I've already put changes in place that have gotten people's attention. For example, I announced I would no longer senior rate O6-level project managers. The reason I did that was very specific. Again, it was to put "people" back into personnel management. I think we evolved to a rating scheme that was more focused on careers than people. People can debate this with me, but that's the reason I did it.

That's the short-term type of items I'm going to continue to work with ASC to see what I can do based on what makes sense for our people. Then there are some longer-term issues that I'll grapple with to make people part of the decision process. To effect change in a bureaucracy — rather than get a consensus — you've got to use your gut instinct to make decisions. And you won't please everybody. You have to almost be a benevolent dictator. Because if you wait for consensus, you'll never get the consensus you seek, and before long you'll be gone [on to another assignment]. I've been an acquisition professional since 1991. I feel that I have gained a significant amount of knowledge and insight into the acquisition business. Therefore, if I make a change, there is some underlying basis for it and I don't have to ask for consensus. There are some issues where I will ask my people. By and large, you've got to do some things right away that say you're serious about change, or change will never happen in this business.

My focus will be on "people" for the first year. Obviously my day-to-day duties

will require me to get into programs and budgets and all the normal acquisition issues and AL&T Workforce initiatives. Every day I've got to do something useful as it pertains to people.

Programs are not as important to me — individually — as the idea of what our future requirements will be as an acquisition community to effectively manage those programs. I came into this business where most, if not all, programs were islands unto themselves. During my tenure at TACOM, if you walked into a PM shop, everything you wanted to know about that PM shop was there. That PM shop was primarily focused on a commodity in a certain functional area. Rarely did we go outside that boundary. My best example of how this thinking has changed is to look at information technology and what it's done for us. Back then, when a piece of equipment was added to your system — for example a radio — all you had to do was maintain a space for it, provide power to it and add an antenna mount. That was your interface. Simple. Give me the specifications and I'll build it for you.

Look at what's required today in terms of a weapons platform with the requirement of a shared common operating picture of passing information. Today, the person who manages the tank has to interface outside of his community and really work hard to make sure that his program supports other programs and they support him. That takes integrated training. There are a lot of things today that force our community to be much more interdependent. A Joint Force must be interdependent. The Army Acquisition community must be interdependent. How you structure, and how you encourage people to think of interdependency, is really the key to our future as acquisition professionals. The programs, per se, as they

exist in the budget are not as important to me in the near term as communicating to people who come to me for decisions or send me documents for decision or approval, that I look at them from an interdependency standpoint. I must instill a culture that will encourage people to work together across the various domains.

We have created a program that is beginning to do just that — Stryker, where we have become interdependent. Take Future Combat Systems (FCS) for example. That whole program is based on the idea of interdependency and sharing domain expertise — not growing your own independent domain expertise. It's a completely different construct that we're working toward. And that's the focus I will continue to foster. I don't want to have to worry that PM "X" is talking to PM "Y." It needs to become instilled in the entire AL&T Workforce that we have to work together. That whole idea of interdependency goes beyond programs to partners.

This is not all-inclusive. Everything we do from the beginning of a program until we put it away somehow requires that the following three contracting entities be part of our team: The Army Materiel Command (AMC), Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) and Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA). Whether your program is in development when you're talking about working with the new R&D [Research and Development] Command or if it's putting together a program with the involvement of ATEC — it comes back to the fact that you can't survive by yourself. You need the expertise and the support of those three interdependent agencies as a minimum, outside of your PM shop or outside of your program. What I

plan to do every day is enforce program interdependency — that's what's important to me.

Along with that, there's one thing that I don't want to hear. If somebody comes to me and complains because they have a log [logistics] problem and they're not the life-cycle manager, I won't accept that. Logistics must be their partner in life-cycle management. And ultimately, their success is dependent upon how they interface and work with AMC.

Rather than complaining about something, go do something about it. From the beginning of the time that you're a sustaining PM and you work in a program and part of your program doesn't include your supporting AMC MSC [major subordinate commands] or whatever piece it takes — you're remiss. If you look at ATEC as only a tester who's going to grade your paper, you're wrong. They, too, are part of the partnership.

From the beginning of your program through the end, ATEC is an important enabler and integrator for you. They don't just sit on the side of the road as you drive by waiting to give you a thumbs-up or down. You partner with them from the beginning of the process and you understand that they have a role to play, a legal role, and they have a job to do as well.

Do not talk about the "testers." The testers are all of us. If you come to me

and blame something on the "testers," I contend that you haven't worked with them. If you have a deficiency in test — whether it be developmental testing or operational testing — and you blame it on somebody other than yourself, you're wrong. You need to work the testing portion of the program just like cost and schedule, because testing ensures our programs provide Soldiers the best equipment in the world.

AL&T: The Army Chief of Staff has 16 Focus Areas. Have you received any direction from him or the Vice Chief of Staff on how the AL&T Workforce can best support Army Transformation?

Y3: I think we were a bit proactive. I don't know if anybody knows this but back in the October-November timeframe, Mr. [Claude M.] Bolton called a special ASARC [Army Systems Acquisition Review Council/Committee]. It was announced as an FCS ASARC. What it really turned into was our

opportunity to explain to the Army Staff what we thought these Focus Areas mean to the acquisition community. The point we tried to make is that Focus Areas are DOTLMSPF [doctrine, organization, training, leader development, materiel, soldiers, personnel and facilities]. People get too focused on the role of "M," materiel, because "M" is where the money is. You can't get to the "M" unless you look across the entire spectrum.

So if you're in a position where you have to make a hard decision, and you're at a point where somebody asks you whether your program should be terminated, your answer should never be based on what's good for us — "us" being the workforce, "us" being the command where we're located, "us" being the acquisition community. The answer should always be "It's good for Soldiers."

Because "M" means you have to go after dollars. There may be a cheaper way to meet a Focus Area to look after how we manage people. We made a case that before people start looking at these Focus Areas demanding materiel solutions, we should look at it more broadly in terms of what capabilities these Focus Areas require. Some of the Focus Areas don't touch us at all. But we are participants in those Focus Areas where there is discussion that would impact materiel. We're players and we have different people playing, like representatives from PEOs, from the tech base, from Washington, DC, and elsewhere. Throughout the process, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC] is taking the lead in most of the Focus Areas that would affect materiel and we are interfacing with them to make it happen. But specific guidance, no, but understanding where the Army's going and at least our concern that in some areas people were too quick to look at the "M" solution even though we're "M." Yes, we would have welcomed the opportunity to excel. Remember, "M" carries a bill. And maybe that's not what you want to do. There are other ways to get after it.

You will see some impacts in the spring when most of the Focus Areas are due out. Right now, we want to be a participant. We want to influence, and we want to put our thoughts on the table so we're not just given something to execute. That's where we are right now.

AL&T: You have got a unique background. You were a battalion commander who came in as an acquisition assistant program manager. You became a PM and then a PEO. How do you think that these skills are going to benefit you as the MILDEP?

Y3: I'm unique only because I existed before 1991 when the old program

would allow us to dual track. And I was fortunate that I had some jobs that enabled me to do both. I think officers gain critical field experience between the 7th and 8th year of service. It's the troop-leading experience, the leadership aspect of it — not the technical aspect of it — that's necessary. You can be the most technically qualified person in the world and have the most technically challenging program, but my experience tells me that programs are successful because of quality DOD civilian and military personnel who are properly trained and led. People want decisiveness, they want things that you get from the diversity of experiences many of us have had — from leading Soldiers. That experience is one aspect of what I bring to the MILDEP position.

Another important point is, at the end of the day, no matter what we think our

purpose is, the only thing that matters is that we deliver capabilities to Soldiers. So if you're in a position where you have to make a hard decision, and you're at a point where somebody asks you whether your program should be terminated, your answer should never be based on what's good for us — "us" being the workforce, "us" being the command where we're located, "us" being the acquisition community. The answer should always be "It's good for Soldiers."

Sometimes we get too hung up on "our" program. It's not "our" program, it's the Army's program, and it ex-

ists only because the Army said at some point in time it wanted the provided capability. Things change all the time and, ultimately, we have to remember that if we didn't have Soldiers, we wouldn't have a need for acquisition. Nothing else matters in terms of why we exist. I think you can see the pride of ownership, the

esprit, that a lot of our organizations have, when you turn on the TV at night and see equipment they provided that gives Soldiers the capability to fight and win on a very complex battlefield. Sometimes programs take a long time to mature, but when you see something happening with Soldiers, when you see a program you are working become successful, I think that makes all the hard work and personal sacrifice worth it and you can proudly say "I made a difference in the life of a Soldier." It's not so much about what rank you are or how much money you make. It's more about being able to go back at the end of the day and say "I had a hand in giving Soldiers a capability and they're much better off than they would be without it."

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Ballard Promoted to Senior Executive Service



Tina Ballard, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Policy and Procurement), was promoted to the Senior Executive Service in a ceremony at the Pentagon Jan. 12, 2004. Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Claude M. Bolton Jr. presided over the promotion ceremony.